

## Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

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DRAFTED BY AF:WBEDMONDSON:EW

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S/S MR. SEBASTIAN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 292822

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA:REPLY TO FCO REQUESTS OF NOV. 26, 1976

REF: LONDON 19096 (NODIS)

1. ASSESSMENT OF CUBAN ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARD RHODESIA (PARA 2 REFTEL) UNDER PREPARATION AND WILL BE FORWARDED SEPTEL.

2. IN REPLY TO REQUEST FOR OUR REACTIONS TO POSTING MID-LEVEL OFFICER IN SALISBURY WHILE GENEVA TALKS CONTINUE (OR GO INTO ADJOURNMENT) YOU MAY MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

A. -- WHILE WE APPRECIATE IDEA OF FCO LIAISON OFFICER WOULD BECOME VERY ATTRACTIVE WHEN IT APPEARS AGREEMENT ON INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS GOING AHEAD SMOOTHLY AND PREPARATIONS NEED TO BE MADE FOR BRITISH ASSUMPTION OF WHATEVER ROLE THEY ARE TO PLAY IN SALISBURY DURING THE TRANSITION, WE BELIEVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH AN IDEA AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE PREMATURE AND COULD PRODUCE ADVERSE REACTIONS AMONG AFRICAN AND OTHER STATES.

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B. -- AS LONG AS CONFERENCE IS STILL DISCUSSING MAJOR

ISSUES AND BEFORE THERE IS ANY UNDERSTANDING ON BRITAIN'S  
ROLE IN THE TRANSITION, LIAISON CAN PRESUMABLY BE ACCOM-  
PLISHED SATISFACTORILY AND WITHOUT UNDUE ATTENTION THROUGH

SMITH'S DELEGATION IN GENEVA. (SOUTH AFRICA ALSO OFFERS  
A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION TO SMITH'S GOVERNMENT.) ON  
THE OTHER HAND, PREMATURE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LIAISON  
OFFICE MIGHT CREATE FALSE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS WITH  
SMITH GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN A NEW TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT  
THAT LIAISON IS BEING ESTABLISHED--OR THAT BRITAIN IS  
WORKING ON ASSUMPTION THAT SMITH WILL BE PLAYING PRE-  
DOMINANT ROLE IN TRANSITION GOVERNMENT.

C. -- THESE PROBLEMS WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE MANAGEABLE  
WHEN THERE IS ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT ON TRANSITION GOVERN-  
MENT AND CLEAR PICTURE OF TRANSITIONAL FUNCTIONS  
WHICH SUCH OFFICE WOULD BE PREPARING WAY FOR BRITAIN TO  
ASSUME.

D. -- HAVING LIAISON OFFICER DURING ADJOURNMENT WOULD  
DEPEND ON NATURE OF ADJOURNMENT. WORST CASE WOULD BE IF  
ADJOURNMENT CAME AS RESULT OF IMPASSE OVER IMPORTANT  
ISSUES WITH POSSIBILITY OF BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS. IN  
CASE OF SHORT ADJOURNMENT FOR OTHER REASONS, E.G.  
CHRISTMAS, LIAISON OFFICER COULD PERFORM RECOGNIZABLY  
USEFUL ROLE IN FACILITATING RETURN TRAVEL OF VARIOUS  
DELEGATION MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE NOT PART OF WHITE  
REGIME. ROBINSON

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